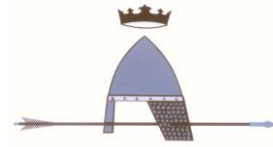




Battle Town Council



**MINUTES of a Meeting of the
FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE
held on Tuesday, 4 September 2012 at
The Almonry, High Street, Battle at 7.30pm**

Present: Cllr R Bye - Chairman
Cllrs: Mrs M Kiloh, R Harris, R Jessop, Ms M-L Neill and Mrs S Pry.

Simon Alexander, Chairman of Beautiful Battle was also in attendance.

1. Apologies for Absence – None.

2. Disclosure of Interest – None.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 6 June 2012. Cllr Jessop proposed approval of the minutes, seconded by Cllr Mrs Pry. This was agreed and they were duly signed.

4. Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

As already advised to all Council Members by email, confirmation had been received that the **Quality Council re-accreditation** had been successful. However, a recommendation from the Panel is that, in future, Councillor training is more fully recorded in the minutes of meetings and that a complete record of attendance is kept so that it can be referred to more easily in the future. Committee Members thanked Cllr Harris and the Clerk for assembling all the documentation and the evidence for the submission. It was agreed that a press release should be issued which could usefully promote the Council in terms of attracting interest to fill current vacancies.

5. Correspondence and Communications

The Clerk reported that the External Auditors had now signed off the **Annual Return**. Whilst not affecting their overall opinion that proper practices had been followed and that legislation and regulatory requirements had been met, the Auditors had asked for a change in the way stamps are accounted for and that more formal arrangements should be made for carrying out risk assessments annually. Following a competitive tender process the Audit Commission has announced that there will be a change of External Auditors for the next five years.

A letter had been received from the Council's advisors regarding the **review of the rent for George Meadow and Upper Stumblets**. In the light of recent improvement in livestock prices an increase of £300 has been recommended. **Cllr Bye proposed recommending to Council acceptance of this, seconded by Cllr Mrs Pry. This was agreed unanimously.**

The £30,000 **Barclays Business Bond** matures on 8 September having earned £448 interest over 9 months. **Cllr Jessop proposed that Council be recommended to renew the Bond for a further 9 months from 12 October at an interest rate of 1.5%. This was seconded by Cllr Ms Neill and agreed unanimously.**

6. Budget Report 2012-13

The Clerk had circulated the attached summary together with a commentary which explained that the previous forecast "deficit" of about £10,000 had risen to just over £18,500 for 2 main reasons. Firstly, the cost of dealing with the flooding in George

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Meadow and secondly a substantial fall in receipts from cemetery income. Other than deferring the planned repairs to the exterior of the Almonry it was agreed that little could be done to restrict further expenditure, the bulk of which relates to committed day to day activity. In terms of cash flow it would be necessary to consider carefully whether the £20,000 Bond should be renewed when it matures towards the end of December.

The Clerk reminded the Committee of the commitment, now enshrined in the Financial Regulations, to prepare and update a 3 year plan as part of the annual budget setting process. To assist with this he was asked to provide each Committee with historical financial data which should help in identifying the cost of core activity as distinct from optional expenditure.

7. Bank Reconciliation Statement

The attached statement at 31 July 2012 was noted. In order that, in future, a comparison can be made the Clerk was asked to show figures for the same date in the previous year.

8. Policy Reviews

As agreed at the previous meeting Committee Members had undertaken a review of various policies. In some cases redrafted papers had already been circulated; in other cases authors spoke about changes being proposed in papers about to be circulated. A number of comments were made and it was agreed that further thoughts should be exchanged with a view to final drafts being available in a couple of weeks, ready for recommendation to Council at the next F&GP meeting.

9. Insurance renewal

Having reviewed the insurance policy the Clerk invited the Committee to consider whether a number of items should continue to be covered. It was agreed that the Oak planters on the Abbey Green, the Town Model, the old mortuary building at the cemetery and the 2 concrete store buildings at the recreation ground could be omitted.

10. Repairs to the Almonry Building

Funding of this had already been discussed in the context of the budget review but, in any event, the Clerk's attempts to obtain further quotes had, so far proved fruitless. 2 companies had inspected about 2 months ago and both say that they will provide a quote but these are still awaited.

11. Almonry garden

Simon Alexander was welcomed to the meeting. He circulated a written report which, in respect of the Almonry Garden, mentioned the need to replace some of the thyme plants along the central path in the upper garden and the replacement of some roses which had become very leggy.

The remainder of his report focussed on wider issues regarding the planting and maintenance of baskets and tubs throughout the town. Whilst thanking Mr Alexander for his thoughts the Committee agreed that these are matters which will be best discussed initially by the Battle in Bloom Group, taking account of any comments made by the South & South East in Bloom judges. A specific issue which will need to be considered again is the impact which the cordyline trees have on the planting in the roundabout. This will need to be discussed by the Estates Committee.

The agreement with **Beautiful Battle** to maintain the Almonry garden expires on 31 March 2013. **Cllr Harris recommended that it should be renewed on the same basis as existing with payment remaining at £2500 for a further 3 year period. This was seconded by Cllr Mrs Pry and agreed unanimously.**

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12. Matters for Information and Future Agenda Items – None.

13. Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday, 6 November 2012

The meeting closed at 9.10pm

**CLLR R BYE
CHAIRMAN**

